

# LOUISIANA'S ALLIGATOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

## 2014-2015 ANNUAL REPORT



COASTAL & NONGAME  
RESOURCES DIVISION

presented to

**THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL  
RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT AND THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES**

Prepared by

**The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries,  
Office of Wildlife, Coastal and Nongame Resources Division  
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## Introduction

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (Department) manages the American Alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) as a commercial, renewable natural resource. The Department's sustained use program is one of the world's most recognizable examples of a wildlife conservation success story. Louisiana's program has been used as a model for managing various crocodilian species throughout the world. Since the inception of the Department's program in 1972, over 976,000 wild alligators have been harvested, over 8.5 million alligator eggs have been collected, and over 5.2 million farm raised alligators have been sold bringing in millions of dollars of revenue to landowners, trappers and farmers. Conservative estimates have valued these resources at 80 to 90 million dollars annually, providing significant, direct economic benefit to Louisiana.

This report, per R.S. 56:279 (E), provides a historical perspective, outlines the basis and philosophy of the Department's management program, reviews the federal government's oversight and approval role for management of the alligator in the United States, discusses wild, farm and nuisance alligator programs, lists research activities, and reviews the revenue and expenditure information associated with the management program and the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund. A separate report, furnished by the Department, details the activities and expenditures of the Alligator Advisory Council.

## Historical Perspective

Alligators have been used commercially for their valuable leather since the 1800s. This harvest was generally unregulated throughout the 1900s, until a gradual population decline resulted in severely reduced harvests in the early 1950s. In 1962, the alligator season in Louisiana was closed, and research studies focusing on basic life history factors were undertaken which led to development of a biologically sound management program. Of tremendous importance was the establishment of a rigorous survey method to estimate and monitor population trends.



From 1962 through August 1972, alligators were totally protected. During this time a myriad of state and federal laws regulating harvest distribution and allocation of take, methods of harvest and possession, transportation and export of live alligators, alligator skins and their products was enacted. Similarly, in 1970 the Louisiana Legislature recognized that the alligator's value, age at sexual maturity, and vulnerability to hunting required unique consideration and passed legislation providing for a closely regulated experimental commercial harvest.

The goals of the Department's alligator program are to manage and conserve Louisiana's alligators as part of the state's wetland ecosystem, provide benefits to the species, its habitat and the other species of fish and wildlife associated with alligators. The basic philosophy was to develop a sustained use management program which, through regulated harvest, would provide long term benefits to the survival of the species, maintain its habitats, and provide significant economic benefits to the citizens of the state. Since Louisiana's coastal alligator habitats are primarily privately owned (approximately 81%), our sustained use management program provides direct economic benefit and incentive to private landowners, and alligator hunters who lease land, to protect the alligator and to protect, maintain, and enhance the alligator's wetland habitats. One of the most critical components of the management program was to develop the complex set of regulations which required individual applications for each property to be considered for tag allocation, landowner permission, proof of ownership and detailed review of habitat quality related to alligator abundance, all of which combined to equitably distribute the harvest in relation to population levels.

During the period of total protection (1962-1971) alligator populations increased quickly and by 1972 the Department was ready to initiate its new sustained use management program. On September 5, 1972 the alligator season was reopened in Cameron Parish and a total of 59 hunters harvested 1,350 alligators. The season was expanded to include Vermilion Parish in 1973, Calcasieu Parish in 1975, an additional nine coastal parishes in 1979 and statewide in 1981 (Table 1).

## **Oversight by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Five years after Louisiana closed the alligator harvest season, the alligator was listed under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1967. At this time the alligator was considered an endangered species throughout its range. In March of 1974, Louisiana petitioned the Secretary of the Interior, requesting that populations of the alligator in Louisiana be removed from the list of threatened and endangered species in Cameron, Vermilion and Calcasieu Parishes. In subsequent years, similar petitions sought to reclassify the alligator, first in nine additional coastal parishes in 1978 and then statewide in 1981. Each of these petitions was based on results of detailed scientific study and the demonstrated success of the early harvest programs.

Export of alligator skins and products out of the United States is regulated by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This treaty, which became effective in 1975, regulates the international trade in protected species; its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does

not threaten their survival. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) administers CITES requirements and controls for the United States. The species covered by CITES are listed on one of three Appendices, according to the degree of protection needed. Currently, the alligator is listed on Appendix II of CITES, because of their similarity of appearance to other crocodilians that are truly endangered or threatened.

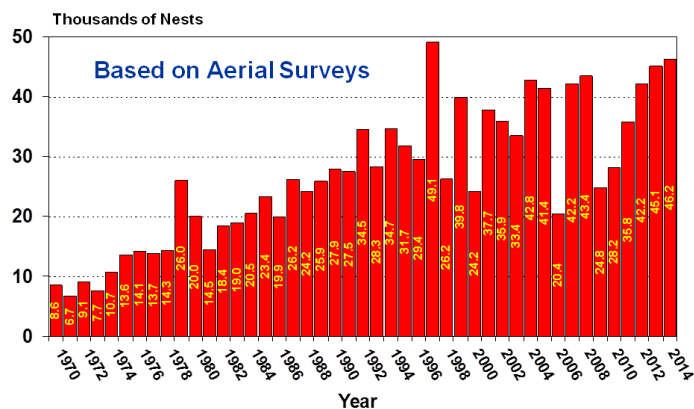
In order to fulfill CITES requirements, the USFWS through a series of rulemakings, has developed a complex set of requirements with which the individual states, including Louisiana, must comply in order to be granted export approval for harvested alligators skins and products. The most critical component in these requirements is that the Department must certify, on an annual basis, that the harvest programs we administer will not be detrimental to the survival of the species. The “no detriment” finding is predicated on our assessment of the current condition of the alligator population, including trends, population estimates or indices, data on total harvest, harvest distribution and habitat suitability evaluation. Additionally, the management program must provide for a rigorously controlled harvest with calculated harvest level objectives. All alligators and eggs harvested must be taken from specifically identified properties and all hides individually tagged (with approved, serially marked CITES export tags furnished by the USFWS). The USFWS requires strict accountability for each tag allocated to the harvester, requiring all unused tags be returned at the close of the season.

## Wild Alligator Management Program

In 1970, the Louisiana State Legislature (Act 550) gave the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries full authority to regulate the alligator season in Louisiana. Since that time, the Department has annually inventoried alligator nest production throughout coastal Louisiana in order to assess the status of alligator populations. Results of annual alligator nest surveys are compiled to provide estimates of nest density (acres per nest) by parish and by habitat type (brackish, intermediate, or fresh marshes). Private and publicly owned lands (State and Federal Refuges, and Wildlife Management Areas) are compiled separately.

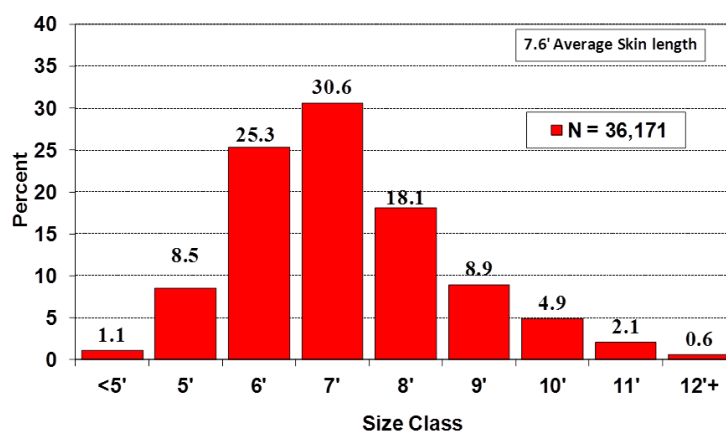
In June/July 2014, over 2,800 miles of transects were flown, surveying 135,000 acres of wetland habitat. The sampling intensity covers approximately 3.4% of 2.3 million acres of private coastal wetlands, and 3.4-10.8% of some 622,000 acres of public coastal wetlands. During the summer of 2014 we estimated that 46,221 alligator nests were present in coastal marsh habitats (a 2.5% increase from 2013) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Louisiana Coastal Marsh Alligator Nest Production, 1970-2014**



Nest density and alligator population estimates are combined with a detailed review of harvest parameters and a general assessment of environmental factors observed during each survey to determine final harvest level objectives. Over 50 individual alligator harvest quotas are developed annually in order to distribute the harvest in relation to alligator abundance in the various habitats across the state. A listing of the 2014 wild alligator harvest quotas is appended as Exhibit 1. In the best habitat one alligator is harvested per 55 acres, while in the poorer habitats one alligator is harvested per 400 acres.

**Figure 2. Louisiana Wild Alligator Harvested, 2014 Regular Harvest Skin Lengths**



Alligator hunters annually submit a description of the property on which they have permission to hunt. The Department assesses the habitat quantity and quality and determines the number of alligators that can be harvested by each hunter. This methodology ensures that alligators are harvested in proportion to their population levels and that the harvest will not negatively impact populations at any location. The currently approved quota system represents an allowable wild alligator harvest, which coupled with the state authorized wild alligator egg harvest program represents a level of population utilization currently unparalleled in the world of crocodilian management.

Under this sustained use alligator program, over 976,000 wild alligators have been harvested since 1972 (Table 2). The annual harvest takes place in September to specifically target the adult males and immature segments of the alligator population. Adult females, which typically inhabit interior marshes in September, would be more susceptible to harvest if the season was scheduled during the spring or summer. During the 2014 wild season, a total of 36,277 alligators were harvested by 3,279 licensed alligator hunters. Alligators harvested averaged 7.6 feet in length (Figure 2), with an estimated value of \$13.8 million.

Each year the alligator program staff works closely with landowners and alligator hunters to provide assistance regarding alligator management on their respective properties. We have provided numerous habitat base maps to landowners for their use in participation of both the

wild and alligator egg harvest programs. Harvest reports summarizing average lengths and size class frequency distribution of harvested alligators are available upon request.

## Farming/Ranching Program

Early alligator farms in Louisiana were generally small, family owned operations; and often run more as a hobby/curiosity than a commercial enterprise. Extensive studies done by Department biologists showed alligators could be efficiently cultured and grown in captivity. Egg ranching (collection of alligator eggs from the wild) proved more economical and successful than captive breeding; private egg collections were first permitted, on a limited basis, in 1986.

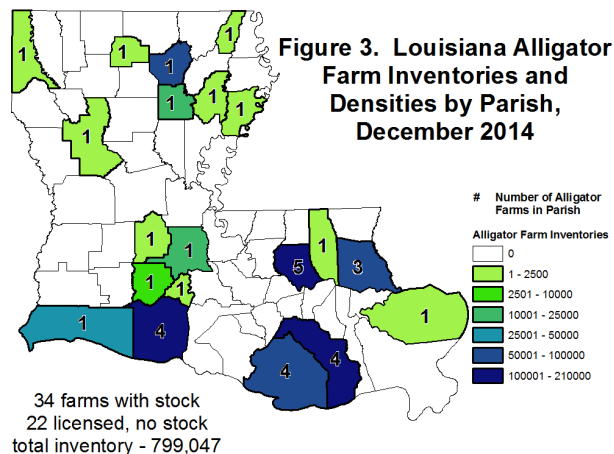


Louisiana's alligator ranching program increased dramatically between 1986 and 1990. To ensure wild alligators were not depleted as a result of egg collections, and to ensure future recruitment of sub-adult alligators to the breeding population, the Department currently requires a quantity of juvenile alligators equal to 12% of the eggs hatched by the rancher be returned to the wild within two years of hatching.

A variable return rate was established based on the estimated survival rates for wild juvenile alligators. Using the relationship of survival between size classes, we extrapolated return rates based on expected survival rates for alligators from 36 to 60 inches. More alligators must be returned if the average total length is smaller, and fewer animals are required if the average length is larger. Close monitoring of the survival of these alligators will continue for many years.

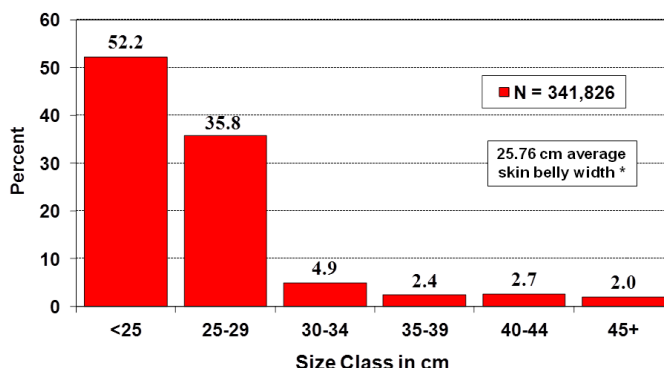
Enormous effort has been made by the Department to monitor the fate of the alligators released to the wild. In FY 2014 we released a total of 46,794 farm raised alligators into the wild to maintain wild alligator populations. Each alligator released is measured, sexed, tail-notched, tagged and recorded prior to release to the same area where the farmers had originally harvested the eggs. Although it is costly to the ranchers to fulfill the "returns to the wild" obligation, it is an integral necessity of the program, considering the large number of eggs collected. In 2014, a total of 528,719 wild alligator eggs were collected producing 468,142 hatchling alligators (Table 3).

As of January 2015 there were 56 licensed farmers in Louisiana with on farm inventories totaling 799,047 alligators (Figure 3). During the 2014 tag year (January 2014 through December 2014) an estimated 341,888



farm-raised alligators were harvested, averaging 25.76 cm in belly width (Figure 4). The total estimated value of these alligators was \$81.7 million (Table 4).

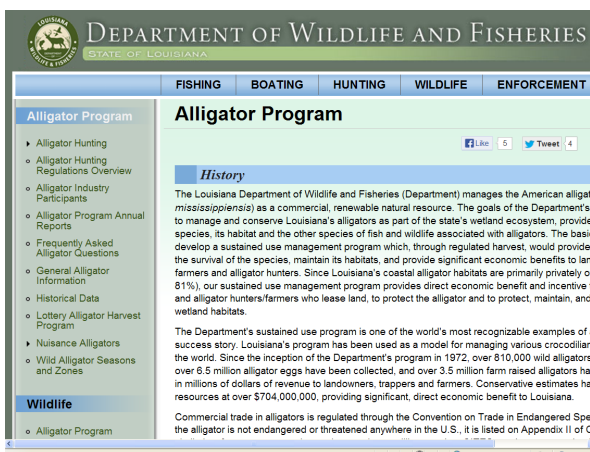
**Figure 4. Louisiana Farm Alligators Harvested, 2014 Skin Belly Widths**



Beginning late winter and continuing into spring and summer of 2009, the worldwide economic recession significantly impacted world trade in raw and tanned alligator skins and manufactured products. Egg harvest numbers rebounded in 2011 and 2012, although some eggs were lost to coastal flooding in June 2012. Since early 2010, price and demand for both wild and farm-raised alligators has continued to recover. With wild egg collections reaching over 528,000 in 2014, alligator farm inventories have risen above pre-recession numbers in late 2014.

In order to better meet the needs of the alligator industry, the Department sponsors meetings for all segments of the industry (farmers, hunters, and landowners) which gives the industry participants an opportunity to prioritize and discuss the current issues facing the state's alligator industry. The Department also created specific e-mail ([LAalligatorprogram@wlf.la.gov](mailto:LAalligatorprogram@wlf.la.gov)) and website ([www.lagatorprogram.com](http://www.lagatorprogram.com)) addresses for the alligator program to provide additional and easier methods for alligator industry participants and the general public to ask questions and acquire information. Alligator program staff members continue to compile and update contact information, including e-mail addresses, which are used to promptly notify participants of available and arising program information. In addition to the on-site visits, the staff communicates with farmers on a regular basis to schedule releases, hide inspections, live animal inspections, coordinate farm transfers, alligator egg collection permits, and to issue and follow up on CITES harvest tags.

The Department contracts with the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine to provide various services to the alligator industry. On numerous occasions the staff arranged for transportation of sick or problem alligators and



**Alligator program webpage**

sample skins from farms to the LSU Vet School for necropsy or skin evaluation. One of these contracts provides for the availability of a veterinarian to respond to farm related problems. Farmers routinely contact Alligator Program staff or Dr. Javier Nevarez and get a rapid response to their problem. We also arranged collection and delivery of alligator research specimens to numerous graduate students and university faculty.

Despite setbacks from Hurricanes Rita and Ike, numerous wildlife groups, including university faculty and students, were hosted at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge for educational purposes; as were professional representatives from domestic and international organizations. Presentations were made at various civic organizations and captive alligators were often loaned out for educational purposes.

## **Nuisance Alligator Program**

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries manages a statewide nuisance alligator control program. The nuisance program is designed to remove problem alligators in order to avoid potential human/alligator conflicts. Through the process of nuisance alligator hunter appointments and annual renewals the Department maintains a statewide network of qualified nuisance alligator hunters. Nuisance alligator complaints are phoned into various Department offices, where complaints are recorded and then forwarded to a nuisance alligator hunter in the vicinity of the complaint. Nuisance hunters respond promptly and catch and remove the alligator as deemed necessary. Hunters are allowed to harvest the nuisance alligator and to process the meat and skin of the alligator for commercial sale. This process provides for immediate response to problem alligators and for payment to the nuisance alligator hunter, thereby minimizing the program operating costs to the Department.

During 2014-15, a total of 62 nuisance alligator hunters were enrolled in the program; annually the nuisance hunters respond to several thousand complaints and harvested approximately 2,500 alligators.

## **Research Activities**

The following list provides a summary of the various research and monitoring projects that the alligator program staff conducted and/or participated in during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

### **Monitoring**

**1. Evaluation of survival, growth, and reproduction in farm released alligators** - This activity involves numerous projects related to survival analysis, growth, and reproductive success (farm-released vs. native wild). Due to the recent reduction of the 14% release rate to 12%, it is imperative to monitor survival closely. The 12% return rate started with the 2007 permits (releases “due” in 2009). Information on size class frequency distribution of wild alligator populations and susceptibility to harvest is provided annually to enhance survival estimates. Although some growth information has been published we plan to evaluate growth

rates in more detail; we now have "re-traps" that were captured over 20 years since release, and this is undoubtedly one of the largest mark-recapture projects currently in progress. Previously staff from the LSU Department of Experimental Statistics assisted with annual evaluation of survival and growth based on farm "re-traps" recovered in September harvests. We now have contractors from LSU's School of Renewable Natural Resources providing input as to analyses on this project, which includes a graduate student Master's degree project.

**2. Coast wide nest survey** - The annual coastal nesting survey is essential for monitoring our alligator population, and is used annually to determine wild alligator and wild alligator egg harvest quotas (for the adult harvest each September as well as egg ranching quotas). This is an integral part of our required "finding of no detriment" needed to achieve export authorization by the USFWS.

**3. Evaluation of statewide harvest program** - We continue to analyze size class frequency distribution, average size, sex ratios, etc. for alligators harvested each year. During the 2014 wild season staff collected sex ratio data on 13,573 alligators (66.5% males, 33.5% females) which represented a significant percentage of the total alligators harvested. This project, coupled with coastwide nest survey provides critical information regarding the status of the wild alligator population. Data generated from these projects provides the basis for evaluating the impact of our current harvest strategies and for establishment of annual wild harvest quotas.

**4. Evaluation of alligator nest density** - LDWF biologists work with cooperating alligator farmers to gain access to their GPS data from annual egg collections. This data will facilitate comparisons between our coastwide nest survey and estimates of nest density as recorded by the farmer during egg collections. Some farmers have advised staff of reduced nest production on selected wetlands; close review of this nesting production data will allow us to evaluate nest distribution and density changes over time.

**5. West Nile Virus (WNV)** - The Department, in conjunction with LSU School of Veterinary Medicine (LSUSVM), continues to monitor occurrence of WNV on alligator farms in Louisiana. Initial mortality related to WNV occurred in fall/winter 2003. Aggressive mosquito control on farms has reduced on farm mosquito populations and seems to have reduced the incidence of WNV in recent years. During fiscal year 2014-2015 we continued to have expertise from staff at LSUSVM available if needed to collect samples from farm alligators to monitor for any health concerns, provide diagnostics as needed, and assist with other health surveillance parameters. After several years of research, development, and testing, a WNV vaccine was developed, gained conditional approval by the USDA and became available to farmers in October 2011. Several farmers have taken advantage of this new proactive technology to prevent WNV in captive hatchling and yearling alligators.

**6. Best Management Practices** - The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine in conjunction with the Louisiana Alligator Farmers and Ranchers Association developed a document entitled "Best Management Practices for Louisiana Alligator Farming". The document was distributed in June 2011 and details recommended practices to ensure animal welfare of captive reared alligators in Louisiana, including egg collection,

hatching, rearing, release to the wild and euthanasia. This document was updated and distributed in January 2013 as new information regarding euthanasia was investigated, and will be updated as any pertinent topic to alligator farming becomes available. The intent of this document is to ensure that licensed alligator farms/ranches are employing humane methods of working with alligators. Through industry contributions, Dr. Nevarez at LSU's School of Veterinary Medicine has continued to work with LDWF staff to update Best Management Practices as needed.

**7. Alligator Research Facility** - After several years of planning and fund raising by industry personnel, construction is now complete on an alligator research facility at LSU's AgCenter Aquaculture Research Station. Funding for facility construction was provided purely by monetary donations from alligator industry participants including alligator farmers, wetland landowners, tanners, feed manufacturers, alligator hunters and other interested parties. The



building is available to house alligators of various sizes for projects related to all phases of alligator husbandry. LDWF staff has worked closely with alligator producers and feed manufacturers to provide input to identify and prioritize research goals and secure long term funding sources for facility operation. The LSU AgCenter has established an Alligator Research Fund to receive additional donations for funding various research

projects. Hatchlings were provided to Dr. Reigh by LDWF from eggs collected and incubated at Rockefeller Refuge for continued nutrition studies to benefit the alligator farming industry; various diets and feeding regimes are tested and findings disseminated to industry personnel at meetings throughout the year.



The following list provides a summary of the various research and monitoring projects that the alligator program staff conducted and/or participated in during the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

### **Contracts**

**1. Diagnostic services - LSUSVM (Dr. Javier Nevarez)** - Dr. Nevarez is contracted to provide diagnostic services as needed for the alligator industry. Farmers may consult with Dr. Nevarez at any time for assistance with any alligator husbandry or disease issue. Our staff often assists with logistics and transport of alligators/samples to LSUSVM in Baton Rouge for evaluation. Periodic health surveillance of farm released alligators is conducted to monitor health status of farm alligators released to the wild; a manuscript on these findings is being prepared. Dr. Nevarez and pathologists at LSUSVM have also assisted with necropsy and research findings for publications co-authored with LDWF alligator program staff members; including a case report of necrotizing exfoliation in a wild alligator.

**2. LSU School of Natural Resources** - The LSU Department of Experimental Statistics was under contract to provide technical statistical expertise for numerous alligator projects; most importantly the evaluation of survival of farm-released alligators, population trends from nesting survey data, and more recently with hide grade/length correlations. This fiscal year we transitioned to new statisticians (faculty with the School of Renewable Natural Resources) due to the pending retirement of current contract statistician and research associate.

**3. Nutrition Research – LSU AgCenter, Aquaculture Research Station** – A research contract was established as of July 1, 2013 to run through June 30, 2016 for aquaculture nutritionist Dr. Reigh and his research associate to conduct digestibility studies continue to aid farmers in their farm management; industry support from feed manufactures at Cargill have been instrumental in this process. Experimental diets were tested in feeding trials and an experimental diet performed comparably to the standard 56%-protein (control) diet. Two other diets [one with a higher digestible protein content than the one tested and lower digestible energy-to-protein ratio but with similar amino acid ratios, and one with a lower digestible protein content and higher digestible energy-to-protein ratio but with similar amino acid ratios] were tested concurrently with this diet and the control diet, and both gave significantly poorer results than this formulation. The diets were produced as cold-pelleted (sinking) feeds in the lab, so they were not at all similar in physical characteristics to the extruded control diet to which they were compared. Dr. Reigh plans to test a formulation (similar to that described above) in the research facility this year (September 2014 – August 2015) to see if it performs well under more realistic production conditions than could be achieved in the lab tests. If so, we will have a second level of verification that Dr. Reigh's efforts to develop a diet based on the amino acid availability of ingredients, which he previously determined for this particular group of feedstuffs, is on track and we can continue to build on this information base. Dr. Reigh is currently measuring amino acid availability in another set of ingredients that he hopes to have completed soon. The team plans to continue these measurements for as long as possible, with as many ingredients as possible, to establish a database on the nutritional value of a wide range of feedstuffs. We hope to apply what is learned in feeding trials such as these to demonstrate how this information can be used for the benefit of alligator producers. Broad goals are to create more options in feed formulations, allow greater control of feed costs, improve diet utilization, and reduce waste of feeds.

### **Other Research**

In addition to LDWF research studies, we continued to support and collaborate with graduate students, post-doctoral research associates, and university faculty with their research studies on numerous projects. Associates from several universities (Harvard University, Yale University, University of North Texas, University of California at San Bernardino, University of California San Francisco, University of Southern California, La Sierra University, and Western Illinois University) were hosted at Rockefeller in 2014 - 2015 to collect additional samples for several studies, or we provided samples to them if travel costs were prohibitive. Several collaborators made presentations with LDWF staff as co-authors at meetings as listed below.

In summer 2014 and June 2015 we made collections of a series of embryos for further collaborative studies. We collected and preserved these embryos for several research teams.

We published several abstracts and full papers this year, two of which were selected for Publication Awards by the Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists. Some manuscripts published in fiscal year 2014 – 2015 include:

Elsey, R. M. and R. Bourgeois. 2014. *Macrochelys temminckii* (Alligator Snapping Turtle). Juvenile basking. Herpetological Review. 45(4):688-689.

Finger, J. W. Jr., R. J. Williams, M. T. Hamilton, R. M. Elsey, V. A. Oppenheimer, S. D. Holladay, and R. M. Gogal, Jr. 2014. (Abstract). Impact of collection time on hematologic and immune markers in the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*). Poster presentation at the University of Georgia, College of Veterinary Medicine, Science of Veterinary Medicine Research Symposium. October 9, 2014.

Galli, G., R.M. Elsey, E. Dzialowski, H. Shields, and D. Crossley II. 2014. (Abstract). Evidence of hypoxic metabolic programming in developing alligator hearts. Presentation at the American Physiological Society meeting October 5 – 8, 2014, San Diego, California.

Joneson, J. R., R. M. Elsey, and T. Owerkowicz. 2014. (Abstract). Musculoskeletal plasticity of the hindlimb/tail locomotor module in the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*). Presentation at the American Physiological Society meeting October 5 – 8, 2014, San Diego, California.

Joneson, J.R., R.M. Elsey, and T. Owerkowicz. 2014. (Abstract). Tenotomy of the caudofemoralis longus muscle in American alligators elicits no changes in skeletal morphology despite significant muscular changes - unexpected implications for the evolution of theropod locomotion. Presentation at the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology meeting, Berlin, Germany. November 5 - 8, 2014. Pg. 156.

Kerfoot, J. R. Jr., M. P. Fern, and R. M. Elsey. 2014. Scaling the feeding mechanism of captive *Alligator mississippiensis* from hatchling to juvenile. Biology. 3:724-738.

Nelson, D., K. Tate, R. M. Elsey, and D. Crossley. 2014. (Abstract). Temperature effects on heart rate and baroreflex function of embryonic American alligators (*Alligator mississippiensis*). Presentation at the American Physiological Society meeting October 5 – 8, 2014, San Diego, California.

Platt, S.G., R. M. Elsey, P. L. Trosclair, III, and J. T. Linscombe. 2014. Alligator *mississippiensis* (American Alligator). Cannibalism. Herpetological Review. 45(3):488-489.

- Rehorek, S. J., M. Duffy, J. R. Zacherl, K. Anand, R. M. Elsey, and T.S. Smith. 2014. An examination of the sensory structures in the oral cavity of the American alligator (Alligator mississippiensis). *Journal of Morphology*. 275:1312-1320.
- Tate, K., J. Eme, J. Crossley, T. Rhen, R. M. Elsey, Z. Kohl, and D. Crossley. 2014. (Abstract). Hypoxia during critical windows of ontogeny alters organ mass and cardiovascular function in the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*). Presentation at the American Physiological Society meeting October 5 – 8, 2014, San Diego, California.
- Vasconcellos, D., T. Owerkowicz, J. Eme, J. Blank, R. M. Elsey, and J. Hicks. 2014. (Abstract). Cervical osteoderms reveal pattern of whole body growth in juvenile American alligators. Presentation at the American Physiological Society meeting October 5 – 8, 2014, San Diego, California.
- Camarata, T., A. Howard, A. O’Conner, P. Chow, S. Mukta, R. M. Elsey, J. Conrad, B. Beatty, N. Solunias, and A. Vasilyev. 2015. (Abstract). Adult nephrogenesis and persistence of Six2 expressing progenitor cells in the reptilian kidney. Poster presentation at the Experimental Biology meetings, March 28 – April 1, 2015, Boston.
- Elsey, R. M. and D. M. Richard. 2015. Unusually high alligator nest density. *Crocodile Specialist Group Newsletter*. 34:(2)37-38.
- Elsey, R. M., W. Selman, J. G. Nevarez, R. W. Bauer, R. King, M. Dupuis, and K. Kim. 2015. *Alligator mississippiensis* (American Alligator). Necrotizing exfoliation. *Herpetological Review*. 46(2):246-248.
- Elsey, R. M., S. G. Platt, and M. G. Shirley. 2015. An unusual beaver (*Castor canadensis*) lodge in a Louisiana coastal marsh. *Southeastern Naturalist*. 14(2)N28-N30.
- Finger, J. W. Jr., R. J. Williams, M. T. Hamilton, R. M. Elsey, V. A. Oppenheimer, S. D. Holladay, and R. M. Gogal, Jr. 2015. Influence of collection time on hematologic and immune markers in the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*). *Journal of Immunoassay and Immunochemistry*. 36:496-509.
- Jensen, B., B. Boukens, D. A. Crossley, III, R. M. Elsey, D. Sedmera, I. Efimov, and V. M. Christoffels. 2015. (Abstract). A specified atrioventricular conduction system in the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) heart. Poster presentation at 22nd edition of the Weinstein Cardiovascular Development Conference April 30 – May 2, 2015.
- Keenan, S. K., R. M. Elsey, and A. Engel. 2015. (Abstract). The good, the bad, and the unknown: microbial symbioses of the American alligator. Presentation at the SICB meeting. January, 2015, West Palm Beach, Florida. S3.6.

Keenan, S. K., and R. M. Elsey. 2015. The good, the bad, and the unknown: microbial symbioses of the American alligator. *Integrative and Comparative Biology*. (in press). doi:10.1093/icb/icv006.

Lance, V., R. M. Elsey, and P. L. Trosclair, III. 2015 Sexual maturity in male American alligators in southwest Louisiana. *South American Journal of Herpetology*. 10(1):58-63.

Membrano, N., R. M. Elsey, and T. Owerkowicz. 2015. (Abstract). Embryonic responses to carbonic anhydrase inhibition and exogenous calcium supplementation in eggs of the American alligator. Presentation at the SICB meeting. January, 2015, West Palm Beach, Florida. 58.4.

Reed, D. A., L. B. Porro, R. M. Elsey, J. Iriarte, and C. F. Ross. 2015. (Abstract). The presence of the external mandibular fenestra in the lower jaw of *Alligator* does not substantially increase peak von Mises stress and is energetically negligible. Presentation at the SICB meeting. January, 2015, West Palm Beach, Florida. P3-162.

Rosenblatt, A. E., J. C. Nifong, M. R. Heithaus, F. J. Mazzotti, M. S. Cherkiss, B. M. Jeffery, R. M. Elsey, R. A. Decker, B. R. Silliman, L. J. Guillette Jr., R. H. Lowers, J. C. Larson. 2015. Factors affecting individual foraging specialization and temporal diet stability across the range of a large-bodied “generalist” apex predator. *Oecologia*. 178:5-16.

Skates, D. I., T. Owerkowicz, J. Eme, J. M. Blank, R. M. Elsey, and J. W. Hicks. 2015. (Abstract). Locomotor exercise exerts no systemic effect on the dentary in the American alligator. Presentation at the SICB meeting. January, 2015, West Palm Beach, Florida. 58.3.

Yang, J. C. Lien, R. M. Elsey, and T. Owerkowicz. 2015. (Abstract). Cardiac regenerative capacity of *Alligator mississippiensis*. Presentation at the SICB meeting. January, 2015, West Palm Beach, Florida. 58.1.

One staff member is serving on a graduate student committee; we also have several manuscripts currently in press or in review; and we serve as manuscript reviewers for multiple scientific journals and review numerous manuscripts each year.

Our research efforts have been hampered in large part by lack of holding facilities for alligators. We had a small functioning laboratory, but the tremendous physical plant losses due to Hurricane Rita in 2005 and Hurricane Ike in 2008 have limited our progress. This lab was a shared room in the maintenance workshop and is now not usable due to repairs to the shop. Our biological staff constructed a cover/awning to the semi-repaired holding tanks, which has helped. Initial work done to supply adequate heat to holding tanks was completed in spring 2009 and minor repairs continued this fiscal year. Frequent water lines breaks occur and holding tanks leak continuously; and temperature control is sporadic and inconsistent. We met several times again this year to discuss schematic drawings for a new lab and holding facility. Construction of the new laboratory building and improved alligator holding facilities will aid our research progress in the future.

## Revenue and Expenditure Information

In recognizing that the Louisiana alligator industry is a vital aspect of Louisiana's economy and recognizing the many, varied national and international impediments to industry development, and the need to develop and maintain a total alligator conservation program, the Louisiana legislature established the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund in 1991 (R.S. 56:279). This Act established a dedicated source of revenue intended to help defray the costs of the alligator program within the Coastal and Nongame Resources Division of the Department. The specific goals of the legislation are:

1. To provide salaries and financial support including associated indirect costs for the following positions, to provide a minimum of six full-time technical positions (biologists) and eight nontechnical positions such as computer operators, secretaries, and wildlife specialists existing within the Coastal and Nongame Resources Division of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.
2. To assist with funding for law enforcement activities associated with the alligator farm industry when surplus funds are available and recommended by the Louisiana Alligator Advisory Council.
3. To assist with funding marketing programs recommended by the Louisiana Alligator Advisory Council when surplus funds are available.
4. To actively fund research on all aspects involved with alligator conservation and to develop the techniques needed to enhance the commercial alligator industry.
5. To assist in funding management of the alligator population through proper management, harvest and farm facility management.

This legislation provides all the enabling language required to establish the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund including sources of income, investing of the fund, and expenditures from the fund. Further R.S. 56: 253 establishes the alligator hide tag fee and the alligator shipping label fee, specifies the details of collection of these fees, and establishes that these fees shall be no more than \$4.00 per hide or live alligator. R.S.56:256, provides for the collection of a \$0.25 severance tax on each alligator hide taken within the state. R.S. 56:279 C (1) provides that all revenues received by the state from tag fees, alligator shipping label fees, and from the severance tax on alligator skins shall be credited to the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund.

During the 2012 legislative session, R.S.56:279 was amended to provide that monies, from various additional alligator revenue sources are deposited in to the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund. House Bill 643 (ACT 131) provided that *“all revenues derived from the sale of alligators, alligator skins, or alligator eggs harvested from department-administered lands, all fees derived from alligator lottery harvest programs on department-administered lands and public waters and all revenues derived from any other alligator related fee”*, be credited to the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund. The bill also provided that the Office of Wildlife may

expend funds from the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund for alligator program administration. This change resulted in additional revenue for the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund.

During the 2014-15 FY, \$2,675,826 was deposited into the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund, an increase in revenue of \$320,487 from the previous year. Harvest and value of farm raised and wild alligators increased this fiscal year due to gradual recovery from the world-wide economic recession. The alligator industry should be applauded for supporting these legislative endeavors to create a self-generated source of revenue to develop and maintain the state's alligator management program. Annual income and expenditure data for the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund is reported in Table 5.

Table 6 summarizes the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund expenditures by the alligator management program for FY 2013, 2014 and 2015. Expenditures by the alligator management program should have totaled \$1,415,415 in 2014-15; however, the total reflected in table 6 is \$888,187. This difference of \$527,228 is due to salaries from some of the alligator program staff were incorrectly charged to the Conservation Fund thru the CATS time entry system instead to the Alligator Resource Fund. This issue has since been corrected and the funds were returned to the Conservation Fund in FY15-16. Furthermore, if the salaries were correctly charged there would have been less than a 1% decrease in spending. This is reflective of the stability in program activities associated with stabilized harvests levels (wild alligators, wild alligator eggs, and farm-raised alligators). Currently the alligator program staff consists of 6 biologists, 2 wildlife technicians, 2 wildlife technicians (4 year job appointments) 2 administrative coordinators, 1 data manager, and 2 to 4 seasonal WAE technicians.

All expenditures from the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund are provided for in R.S. 56:279. The Department carefully approves and monitors all expenditures to ensure compliance with all legal requirements. The Department's fiscal office can produce a variety of expenditure and budget reports upon request.

## **Habitat Concerns**

One threat or potential limiting factor to Louisiana's alligator population is habitat loss. Because the vast majority of Louisiana's alligators are in the coastal parishes, saltwater intrusion and wetlands/marsh deterioration from numerous causes are very real threats. Additionally, the combined impact of recent hurricanes will likely result in long term reduction of alligator habitat quality in coastal Louisiana.

Vast resources by numerous state and federal agencies have been expended to attempt to limit these losses. Projects to restore/enhance marshes include construction of earthen terraces (to reduce wave action and turbidity), "breakwaters" and protection levees along coastlines, vegetative plantings, marsh restoration, and freshwater diversions. Alligators benefit directly from these efforts to maintain/enhance wetlands. The freshwater diversion projects (Davis Pond and Caernarvon) shift water from the Mississippi River in hopes of re-establishing more favorable salinity conditions for numerous fish and wildlife species. Some preliminary data suggests alligator nesting has improved in the areas enhanced by lower marsh salinity levels. It

is critical that habitat changes are monitored, mapped and incorporated periodically into the alligator program. This will ensure that our harvest programs are adjusted accordingly for corresponding alligator population and habitat changes.

## **Summary**

Louisiana's alligator management program has clearly illustrated that controlled sustained use of the species is successful. The wild harvest has been in place for 43 years and the egg ranching program for 29 years and may appear to operate unchanged every year. However, constant adaptations are made to try to improve both programs. Requests by user groups (farmers, egg ranchers, trappers, landowners, buyers, dealers and other industry personnel) are received and considered as the Department strives to safely manage the alligator resource to the benefit of many user groups with varied interests.

Louisiana's alligator industry is unique. It has recognized the importance of establishing a self-generated revenue source to provide the necessary regulatory and management efforts required to effectively manage the alligator resource. The Department will continue to protect the alligator as a resource while striving to ensure long term, sustainable harvest programs. During 2014-15 FY, the Department, through the use of the Louisiana Alligator Resource Fund, has worked toward achievement of the goals established by the Louisiana Legislature.

**Table 1. Louisiana Alligator Season Dates, Area Open, Harvest Level and Tag Cost, 1972-2014**

Year	Season Dates	No. of Days	Parishes	Tag Fee	
				Amount	Paid By
1972	5 Sept – 17 Sept	13	Cameron	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1973	10 Sept – 28 Sept	19	Added Vermilion	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1975	20 Sept – 19 Oct	30	Added Calcasieu	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1976	9 Sept – 8 Oct	30	No change	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1977	1 Sept – 30 Sept	30	No change	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1979	7 Sept – 7 Oct	31	Coastwide <sup>1</sup>	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1980	4 Sept – 4 Oct	31	No change	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1981	31 Aug – 30 Sept	31	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1982	4 Sept – 3 Oct	30	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1983	10 Sept – 9 Oct	30	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1984	8 Sept – 7 Oct	30	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1985	31 Aug- 30 Sept	31	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1986	6 Sept – 6 Oct	31	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1987	5 Sept – 5 Oct	31	Statewide	\$5.00 <sup>2</sup>	hunter/farmer
1988	10 Sept – 10 Oct	31	Statewide	\$2.00/tag	hunter/farmer
1989	9 Sept – 8 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	hunter/farmer
1990	1 Sept – 30 Sept	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	hunter/farmer
1991	31 Aug – 29 Sept	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	hunter/farmer
1992	10 Sept – 4 Oct	25	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	hunter/farmer
1993	11 Sept – 10 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
1994	3 Sept – 2 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
1995	2 Sept – 1 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
1996	7 Sept – 6 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
1997	6 Sept – 5 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
1998	2 Sept – 1 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
1999	1 Sept – 30 Sept	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2000	30 Aug – 30 Sept	32	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2001	29 Aug – 30 Sept	33	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2002	28 Aug – 30 Sept	34	Statewide	\$2.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2003	3 Sept – 2 Oct	30	Statewide	\$2.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2004	1 Sept – 30 Sept	30	Statewide	\$3.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2005 <sup>3</sup>	14 Sept – 30 Oct	46	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2006	6 Sept – 5 Oct	30	Statewide	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
2007 <sup>4</sup>	29 Aug – 27 Sept	30	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	5 Sept – 4 Oct	30	West Zone		
2008 <sup>5</sup>	27 Aug – 19 Oct	54	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	3 Sept – 19 Oct	47	West Zone		
2009	26 Aug – 24 Sept	30	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	2 Sept – 1 Oct	30	West Zone		
2010	25 Aug – 23 Sept	30	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	1 Sept – 30 Sept	30	West Zone		
2011	31 Aug – 29 Sept	30	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	7 Sept – 6 Oct	30	West Zone		
2012 <sup>6</sup>	1 Sept – 4 Oct	34	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	5 Sept – 4 Oct	30	West Zone		

<sup>1</sup> Added Iberia, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Charles, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany<sup>2</sup> Per issuance, regardless of number<sup>3</sup> Opening date was postponed and season was extended due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita<sup>4</sup> State was divided into alligator hunting zones (east and west) from 2007 to present<sup>5</sup> Season was extended due to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike<sup>6</sup> East Zone season was postponed and extended due to Tropical Storm Isaac

**Table 1. Louisiana Alligator Season Dates, Area Open, Harvest Level and Tag Cost, 1972-2014**

Year	Season Dates	No. of Days	Parishes	Tag Fee	
				Amount	Paid By
2013	28 Aug – 26 Sept	30	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	4 Sept – 3 Oct	30	West Zone		
2014	27 Aug – 25 Sept	30	East Zone	\$4.00/tag	fur dealer/shipper
	3 Sept – 2 Oct	30	West Zone		

<sup>1</sup> Added Iberia, St. Mary, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Charles, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and St. Tammany

<sup>2</sup> Per issuance, regardless of number

<sup>3</sup> Opening date was postponed and season was extended due to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

<sup>4</sup> State was divided into alligator hunting zones (east and west) from 2007 to present

<sup>5</sup> Season was extended due to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike

<sup>6</sup> East Zone season was postponed and extended due to Tropical Storm Isaac

**Table 2. September Wild Alligator Harvest in Louisiana, 1972-2014 <sup>1</sup>**

Year <sup>2</sup>	Commercial	Tags	Number	Percent	Avg T. L.	Skin Value		Meat <sup>4</sup>	
	Hunters	Issued	Taken	Success	in Feet	Avg/foot	Total	Amount (lbs)	Value
1972	59	1,961	1,350	68.8	6.92	\$8.10	\$75,670	3	3
1973	107	3,243	2,921	90.1	7.58	\$13.13	\$290,714	3	3
1975	191	4,645	4,420	95.2	7.51	\$7.88	\$261,570	3	3
1976	198	4,767	4,389	92.1	7.09	\$16.55	\$515,003	3	3
1977	236	5,760	5,474	95	7.35	\$12.23	\$492,061	3	3
1979	708	17,516	16,300	93	6.92	\$15.00	\$1,691,940	100,089	\$125,000
1980	796	19,134	17,692	92.5	6.59	\$13.00	\$1,515,674	100,089	\$125,000
1981	913	15,534	14,870	95.7	6.92	\$17.50	\$1,800,757	100,089	\$125,000
1982	1,184	18,188	17,142	94.2	6.82	\$13.50	\$1,578,264	100,089	\$125,000
1983	945	17,130	16,154	94.3	6.92	\$13.00	\$1,453,214	100,089	\$125,000
1984	1,104	18,386	17,389	94.6	6.99	\$21.00	\$2,552,531	100,089	\$125,000
1985	1,076	17,466	16,691	95.6	7.09	\$21.00	\$2,485,123	150,133	\$675,000
1986	1,207	23,267	22,429	96	6.92	\$23.00	\$3,569,800	310,275	\$1,395,000
1987	1,370	24,635	23,892	97	7.09	\$40.00	\$6,775,771	500,444	\$2,250,000
1988	1,545	24,111	23,526	98	7.25	\$48.00	\$8,187,048	600,533	\$3,000,000
1989	1,769	25,492	24,846	97.4	7.25	\$50.00	\$9,006,675	747,448	\$3,000,000
1990	1,916	25,920	25,644	98.9	7.25	\$57.00	\$10,597,383	701,063	\$3,000,000
1991	2,001	24,646	24,011	97.4	7.45	\$32.00	\$5,724,222	684,109	\$2,935,000
1992	1,696	25,551	24,313	95.2	7.25	\$23.00	\$4,054,193	687,835	\$2,951,520
1993	1,702	24,805	23,991	96.7	7.25	\$23.00	\$4,000,499	687,615	\$2,889,000
1994	1,774	27,694	27,120	97.9	7.35	\$37.00	\$7,375,284	771,610	\$3,243,000
1995	1,877	28,931	28,442	98.3	7.35	\$41.00	\$8,570,997	809,088	\$3,400,000
1996	1,947	26,578	25,793	97.0	7.41	\$25.00	\$4,778,153	734,793	\$3,967,800
1997	1,973	29,900	29,085	97.3	7.08	\$18.00	\$3,706,592	828,423	\$4,473,000
1998	1,888	30,198	28,639	94.8	7.08	\$15.00	\$3,041,462	804,679	\$4,350,000
1999 regular	1,902	33,239	32,064	96.5	7.17	\$22.00	\$5,057,775	909,398	\$4,881,000
1999 bonus		3,348	3,206	95.8	5.75	\$15.50	\$285,735	44,335	\$237,250
2000 regular	1,941	31,999	30,532	95.4	7.17	\$27.00	\$5,910,690	1,061,903	\$5,702,419
2000 bonus		3,299	3,146	95.4	5.75	\$23.00	\$416,059	56,785	\$303,801
2001 regular	1,916	32,669	31,867	97.5	7.33	\$22.00	\$5,138,872	732,941	\$3,298,235
2001 bonus		3,402	3,281	96.4	5.83	\$20.00	\$382,565	75,463	\$339,584
2002 regular	1,955	31,757	30,451	95.9	7.25	\$16.00	\$3,532,316	700,373	\$3,151,679
2002 bonus		3,370	2,932	87.0	5.83	\$16.00	\$273,497	67,436	\$303,462
2003 regular	1,873	30,513	28,555	93.6	7.17	\$13.00	\$2,661,612	656,765	\$2,955,443
2003 bonus		3,290	3,026	92.0	5.83	\$13.00	\$229,341	69,598	\$313,191
2004 regular	1,859	31,530	30,406	96.4	7.17	\$22.50	\$4,905,248	699,338	\$3,147,021
2004 bonus		3,705	3,518	95.0	5.83	\$22.50	\$461,474	80,914	\$364,113
2005 regular	1,933	32,487	27,668	85.2	7.25	\$34.50	\$6,920,459	636,364	\$2,863,638
2005 bonus		4,078	3,507	86.0	5.83	\$34.50	\$705,380	80,661	\$362,975
2006 regular	1,872	28,501	27,319	95.9	7.42	\$39.00	\$7,905,572	628,337	\$2,827,517
2006 bonus		3,710	3,538	95.4	6.00	\$39.00	\$827,892	81,374	\$366,183
2007 regular	2,051	33,498	31,127	92.9	7.50	\$38.50	\$8,987,921	715,921	\$3,221,645
2007 bonus		4,226	3,884	91.9	6.00	\$38.50	\$897,204	89,332	\$401,994
2008 regular	2,222	36,299	31,774	87.5	7.50	\$34.50	\$8,221,523	730,802	\$3,288,609
2008 bonus		4,425	3,851	87.0	6.00	\$34.50	\$797,157	88,573	\$398,579
2009 <sup>5</sup>	1,687	24,427	9,143	37.4	7.42	\$7.50	\$508,808	210,289	\$946,301
2010	2,052	31,881	26,532	83.2	7.50	\$13.00	\$2,586,870	610,236	\$2,746,062
2011	2,593	35,749	32,745	91.6	7.42	\$17.00	\$4,130,454	753,135	\$3,389,108
2012	2,958	37,417	34,443	92.1	7.50	\$23.50	\$6,070,579	792,189	\$5,545,323
2013	3,190	38,026	35,578	93.0	7.50	\$29.00	\$7,738,215	818,294	\$5,728,058
2014	3,279	38,503	36,277	93.3	7.6	\$29.00	\$7,995,451	834,371	\$5,840,597

1 Does not include Salvador WMA harvests from 1972-2003 and Marsh Island experimental, nuisance, and farm harvests from 1972-present.

2 The bonus tag program was initiated in 1999 to increase the overall number of wild alligators harvested without putting any additional pressure on the 6' and over portion of the wild population. The bonus tag program was suspended in 2009.

3 Sale of meat not permitted; La. Health Department regulations first allowed meat sales in 1979.

4 Bone in from 1979-1984, deboned from 1985-present.

5 Worldwide economic recession caused alligator hide demand to decline dramatically.

Subject to change, numbers updated December 9, 2015.

### Table 3. Louisiana Alligator Ranching, 1986-2014

Year	Number of Permits	Eggs Collected	Eggs Hatched	Hatch Rate	Alligators Returned to Wild
1986	3	2,903	1,985	68.4%	none
1987	19	18,041	13,782	76.4%	none
1988	60	64,887	50,394	77.7%	1,680
1989	139	181,819	137,323	75.5%	7,078
1990	233	293,412	231,434	78.9%	6,088
1991	225	198,089	165,054	83.3%	44,415
1992	172	164,892	133,463	80.9%	35,230
1993	140	155,891	123,666	79.3%	29,015
1994	158	266,408	223,011	83.7%	21,632
1995	226	314,371	261,428	83.2%	20,795
1996	273	279,237	233,076	83.5%	40,919
1997	266	377,636	321,641	85.2%	48,171
1998	281	280,870	240,118	85.5%	36,732
1999	288	382,611	332,428	86.9%	44,171
2000	322	279,217	236,313	84.6%	39,559
2001	322	354,636	294,405	83.0%	48,288
2002	353	354,523	304,448	85.9%	32,716
2003	376	357,757	307,805	86.0%	50,417
2004	397	397,569	350,661	88.2%	47,431
2005	440	507,315	441,298	87.0%	35,992
2006	483	271,790	224,724	82.7%	40,694
2007	508	501,075	426,385	85.1%	61,913
2008	552	529,527	459,928	86.9%	48,578
2009 *	253	29,822	25,077	84.1%	54,391
2010	454	205,261	173,483	84.5%	27,121
2011	531	353,176	300,546	85.1%	14,357
2012	526	413,648	349,514	84.5%	24,489
2013	560	498,285	432,386	86.8%	38,349
2014	591	528,719	468,142	88.5%	46,794
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,151</b>	<b>8,563,387</b>	<b>7,263,918</b>	<b>84.8%</b>	<b>947,015</b>

\* Worldwide economic recession caused alligator hide demand to decline dramatically.  
Updated December 1, 2015.

**Table 4. Farm Alligator Harvest in Louisiana, 1972-2014 <sup>1</sup>**

Year <sup>1</sup>	No. Farms		No. Skins Sold	Avg T. L. in Feet	Skin Value		Meat <sup>3</sup>	
	Licensed	Sold Skins			Avg/foot	Total	Amount (lbs)	Value
1972	8	3	35	5	\$8.10	\$1,418	<sup>2</sup>	<sup>2</sup>
1973	8	5	103	6.33	\$13.13	\$8,561	<sup>2</sup>	<sup>2</sup>
1975	8	3	83	5.5	\$7.88	\$3,597	<sup>2</sup>	<sup>2</sup>
1976	8	3	360	5.75	\$16.55	\$34,259	<sup>2</sup>	<sup>2</sup>
1977	8	4	376	5.25	\$12.23	\$24,142	<sup>2</sup>	<sup>2</sup>
1980	8	1	191	4.67	\$13.00	\$11,596	957	\$3,342
1981	8	3	360	4.67	\$17.50	\$29,421	1,801	\$6,300
1982	8	1	113	4	\$13.50	\$6,102	452	\$1,582
1983	14	6	1,449	4.58	\$13.00	\$86,273	7,253	\$25,357
1984	12	7	2,836	4.25	\$21.00	\$253,113	11,354	\$39,704
1985	15	12	4,430	4.25	\$21.00	\$395,378	17,736	\$79,740
1986	22	15	5,925	4.5	\$23.00	\$613,238	26,687	\$119,983
1987	30	23	10,670	4.42	\$24.00	\$1,131,874	48,060	\$216,067
1988	47	38	27,749	4.25	\$36.00	\$4,245,597	111,094	\$554,980
1989	83	68	66,737	3.98	\$32.00	\$8,499,624	300,877	\$1,202,362
1990	123	80	88,424	4.03	\$24.00	\$8,552,369	397,732	\$1,786,059
1991	134	91	118,976	4.13	\$15.00	\$7,370,563	536,379	\$2,380,000
1992	125	85	128,026	4.04	\$12.00	\$6,206,700	578,289	\$2,566,000
1993	101	70	121,700	3.87	\$17.00	\$8,006,643	388,010	\$1,720,000
1994	89	62	136,126	3.67	\$20.00	\$9,991,648	277,780	\$1,197,000
1995	83	50	125,460	3.88	\$20.00	\$9,735,696	331,395	\$1,323,000
1996	81	51	161,845	3.91	\$15.50	\$9,808,616	511,668	\$2,297,900
1997	75	36	169,988	3.74	\$16.75	\$10,648,898	542,332	\$2,435,700
1998	73	38	154,399	3.79	\$17.00	\$9,947,928	490,990	\$2,209,455
1999	66	35	187,570	3.64	\$17.00	\$11,606,832	552,693	\$2,487,119
2000	66	35	219,827	3.81	\$20.50	\$17,169,588	659,481	\$2,967,665
2001	63	32	180,391	3.79	\$20.50	\$14,015,479	541,173	\$2,435,279
2002	61	32	237,808	3.73	\$23.50	\$20,845,060	713,424	\$3,210,408
2003	57	32	277,604	3.81	\$24.00	\$25,384,110	832,812	\$3,747,654
2004	55	32	297,376	3.87	\$26.00	\$29,921,973	892,128	\$4,014,576
2005	57	31	256,446	3.91	\$38.00	\$38,102,747	769,338	\$3,462,021
2006	58	29	272,570	4.05	\$42.50	\$46,916,111	817,710	\$3,679,695

Year <sup>1</sup>	No. Farms		No. Skins Sold	Belly Width in cm's <sup>4</sup>	Skin Value		Meat <sup>3</sup>	
	Licensed	Sold Skins			Avg/cm	Total	Amount (lbs)	Value
2007	63	29	305,176	24.79	\$7.25	\$54,848,520	915,528	\$4,119,876
2008 <sup>5</sup>	60	31	290,267	26.41	\$5.50	\$42,162,733	870,801	\$3,918,605
2009	59	28	304,196	28.64	\$5.00	\$43,560,867	912,588	\$4,106,646
2010 <sup>6</sup>	57	22	161,937	27.50	\$6.50	\$28,946,239	485,811	\$2,186,150
2011	56	18	244,670	26.26	\$8.00	\$51,400,274	734,010	\$5,138,070
<u>2012</u>	59	22	293,584	25.92	\$8.50	\$64,682,427	880,752	\$6,165,264
<u>2013</u> <sup>7</sup>	53	15	100,673	25.44	\$8.50	\$21,769,530	302,019	\$2,114,133
<u>2014</u>	54	21	341,888	25.68	\$8.50	\$74,627,313	1,025,664	\$7,179,648

1 Tag year extends from September of the year designated to the next September (example: 1997 = 9/97 to 8/98).

2 Sale of meat not permitted; La. Health Department regulations first allowed meat sales in 1979.

3 Deboned from 1980-present.

4 Average total length for 2007 is 4.08', 2008 is 4.25', 2009 is 4.58', 2010 is 4.42', 2011 is 4.25' and 2012 is 4.25'.

5 Worldwide economic recession caused alligator skin price to decline dramatically.

6 Low harvest resulted from reduced egg collections in 2009 due to worldwide economic recession.

7 2013 was transition year to tag year coinciding with calendar year. 2013 tag year only represent 9/1 to 12/31 (4 months).

Subject to change numbers updated December 1, 2015.

**Table 5. Alligator Resource Fund Income, Expenditures, and Balance, FY 2009-2015**

	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Severance Tax	80,485	87,725	47,795	68,548	72,087	87,622	96,937
Interest Earned	32,371	8,312	5,558	3,128	2,694	2,826	2,433
Hides/Harvest					178,869	246,115	256,862
Shipping Label Fees	126,608	56	20,096	69,064	136,628	166,552	154,572
Egg Harvest					213,000	260,135	419,937
Collection Permit Fees	2,650	3,375	3,925	4,375	4,625	5,400	6,800
Alligator Hide Tag Fees	1,295,270	1,403,600	764,720	1,096,768	1,153,392	1,401,944	1,550,993
Res. Alligator Hunter Licenses	56,025	43,025	52,200	66,775	74,575	80,650	83,059
N/R Alligator Hunter Licenses	18,900	21,600	26,700	49,800	76,050	88,950	80,400
Lottery					6,780	15,095	17,105
Misc Income		4	1,736	14	28	50	6,728
Reduction by Executive Order	<u>-100,821</u>						
Total Revenue	1,511,488	1,567,697	922,730	1,358,472	1,918,728	2,355,339	2,675,826
Less Expenditures	-1,543,289	-1,495,350	-1,335,694	-1,498,044	-1,597,227	-1,772,494	-1,223,930
<b>Net annual income</b>	<b>-31,801</b>	<b>72,347</b>	<b>-412,964</b>	<b>-139,572</b>	<b>321,501</b>	<b>582,845</b>	<b>1,451,896</b>
Add balance from prior year	1,633,563	1,601,762	1,674,109	1,261,145	1,121,572	1,443,073	2,025,918
YEAR-END BALANCE	1,601,762	1,674,109	1,261,145	1,121,572	1,443,073	2,025,918	3,477,814

**Table 6. Alligator Management Program Expenditures for Fiscal Years 2013, 2014 and 2015.**

<b>Budget Category</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
Personal Services	\$948,713	\$1,023,039	\$459,402
Travel	\$19,627	\$25,973	\$25,495
Operating Services	\$68,164	\$76,205	\$137,157
Supplies	\$67,451	\$65,931	\$77,544
Professional Services	\$9,101	\$24,140	\$1,498
Other Charges	\$130,385	\$138,037	\$125,952
Acquisitions	\$59,858	\$53,162	\$3,886
Major Repairs	\$0	\$0	\$0
Interagency Billings	\$25,676	\$22,257	\$57,253
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$1,328,975</b>	<b>\$1,428,744</b>	<b>\$888,187.00</b>

# **EXHIBIT 1**

## 2014 MARSH ALLIGATOR TAG ALLOTMENT BY PARISH

	Tag Allotment/Marsh Type		
	Brackish	Intermediate	Fresh
<sup>(A)</sup> Cameron East	1:225	1:100	1:100
<sup>(A)</sup> Cameron Central	1:400	1:225	1:115
<sup>(A)</sup> Cameron West	1:225	1:100	1:130
Calcasieu	1:250	1:110	1:80
Jeff Davis			1:90
<sup>(B)</sup> Vermilion West	1:85	1:80	1:115
<sup>(B)</sup> Vermilion East	1:140	1:140	1:75
Iberia		1:120	1:120
St. Mary		1:65	1:65
Terrebonne	1:125	1:55	1:55
Lafourche	1:140	1:55	1:90
St. Charles	1:75	1:65	1:65
St. John the Baptist		1:55	1:55
Jefferson	1:200	1:55	1:55
Orleans	1:400	1:400	
<sup>(C)</sup> Plaquemines West	1:250	1:150	1:55
<sup>(D)</sup> Plaquemines East	1:400	1:80	1:55
Plaquemines Delta	1:225	1:175	1:160
St. Bernard	1:400	1:80	
St. Tammany	1:125	1:55	1:55
Tangipahoa		1:55	1:120
Cypress-Tupelo Swamp	1:160		
Dewatered Marsh	1:400 (allotment may be altered pending habitat and biological assessment)		
<sup>(E)</sup> Transitional Marsh	1:400 (except transitional marsh in Plaquemines East will be issued at the rate of 1 tag: per 300 acres)		

<sup>(A)</sup>The dividing line for Cameron East and Central is the Mermentau River, the dividing line for Cameron Central and West is the Calcasieu River/Calcasieu Lake.

<sup>(B)</sup>The dividing line for Vermilion East and West is the Vermilion River Cutoff (4-mile cut).

<sup>(C)</sup>Marsh west of Mississippi River.

<sup>(D)</sup>Marsh east of Mississippi River.

<sup>(E)</sup>Marsh areas which are characterized by a generally declining alligator population caused by degradation of habitat.

**2014 NON-MARSH ALLIGATOR TAG ALLOTMENT BY OFFICE AND PARISH  
LAKE REGION**

OFFICE	PARISH	HABITAT	ACRES OF HABITAT	TAG ALLOTMENT	REMARKS
Minden	Bienville/ Bossier/ Webster	Lake Bistineau	1,720	30	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Caddo	Wallace Lake	2,000	20	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Bossier	Black/Cypress Lake	400	30	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Caddo	Cross Lake	500	30	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Caddo	Caddo Lake	1,800	10	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Natchitoches	Black Lake	1,000	10	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Bienville	Kepler Lake	250	20	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Jackson	Caney Lake	5,000	8	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Rapides	Kincaid Lake	1,000	2	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Winn	Saline Lake	3,000	10	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Saline, DeSoto	Toledo Bend	4,000	16	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Rapides	Cotile Lake	400	4	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Grant	Nantachie Lake	800	2	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Rapides	Indian Creek	500	2	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Bossier	Ivan Lake (Bodcau)	520	4	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>22,890</b>	<b>198</b>	
Monroe	Ouachita	Bayou Desaird North	580	6	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Ouachita/ Morehouse	Bartholomew Lake	405	6	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Tensas	Big Lake WMA	1,000	15	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Buckhorn WMA	300	12	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Lake St. Joseph	800	20	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
		Lake Bruin	2,800	10	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
		Lake St. John	200	20	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Caldwell	Beouf WMA	2,200	36	WMA Lottery Harvest
	Concordia	Lake Concordia	800	16	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Union	D'Arbonne Lake	1800	6	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Ouachita	Russell Sage WMA	4300	18	WMA Lottery Harvest
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>15,185</b>	<b>165</b>	

**2014 NON-MARSH ALLIGATOR TAG ALLOTMENT BY OFFICE AND PARISH  
LAKE REGION**

OFFICE	PARISH	HABITAT	ACRES OF HABITAT	TAG ALLOTMENT	REMARKS
Lake Charles	Evangeline Beauregard	Chicot Lake	1,625	50	State Parks (Experimental Harvest)
		Bundicks Lake	400	4	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
	Vernon	Anacoco Lake	1,000	8	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
		Vernon Lake	4,600	6	Public Lake Lottery Harvest
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>7,625</b>	<b>68</b>	
Opelousas	Avoyelles	Grassy Lake WMA	1,000	9	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Grassy Lake WMA		25	Highest Bidder Basis
		Spring Bayou WMA	5,000	24	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Spring Bayou WMA		81	Highest Bidder Basis
		Pomme-de-Terre WMA	800	12	Highest Bidder Basis
	Iberia/St. Martin	Attakapas WMA	26,300	35	Highest Bidder Basis
	Assumption	Elm Hall WMA	2,843	18	WMA Lottery Harvest
	Iberville, Pt. Coupee	Sherburne COE Lands	3,300	33	Highest Bidder Basis
	Iberville, St. Martin, Pt. Coupee	Sherburne WMA	11,780	12	WMA Lottery Harvest
	St. Landry, St. Martin	Indian Bayou COE Lands	2,878	18	WMA Lottery Harvest
				20	Highest Bidder Basis
	Concordia Concordia La Salle La Salle	Three Rivers WMA	4,500	60	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Red River WMA	3,500	51	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Dewey Wills WMA	8,000	18	WMA Lottery Harvest
		Dewey Wills WMA		20	Highest Bidder Basis
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>69,901</b>	<b>436</b>	
<b>LAKE REGION TOTALS</b>			<b>115,601</b>	<b>867</b>	<b>Experimental Harvests</b>

**2014 NON-MARSH ALLIGATOR TAG ALLOTMENT BY OFFICE AND PARISH  
CYPRESS-TUPELO SWAMP REGION**

OFFICE	PARISH	ACRES OF HABITAT	TAG ALLOTMENT	ACRES/TAG	REMARKS
Opelousas	Iberville	29,880	187	160	Tag allotment based upon review of prior years harvest statistics, night counts and alligator model.
	Lafayette	1,200	8	160	
	Pointe Coupee	1,000	6	160	
	W. Baton Rouge	7,040	44	160	
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>39,120</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>160</b>	
Baton Rouge	Ascension	40,320	252	160	Tag allotment based upon review of prior years harvest statistics, night counts and alligator model.
	E. Baton Rouge	2,000	13	160	
	Livingston	66,720	417	160	
	Tangipahoa	36,181	226	160	
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>145,221</b>	<b>908</b>	<b>160</b>	
New Orleans	St. Charles	39,340	246	160	Tag allotment based upon review of prior years harvest statistics, night counts and alligator model.
	St. James	76,960	481	160	
	St. John	104,320	652	160	
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>220,620</b>	<b>1,379</b>	<b>160</b>	
New Iberia - Bourg	Assumption	98,560	616	160	Tag allotment based upon review of prior years harvests statistics, night counts and alligator model.
	Iberia	31,550	197	160	
	Lafourche	112,350	702	160	
	St. Mary	60,190	376	160	
	Terrebonne	43,014	269	160	
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>		<b>345,664</b>	<b>2,160</b>	<b>160</b>	
<b>SWAMP TOTAL</b>		<b>750,625</b>	<b>4,692</b>	<b>160</b>	

## ATCHAFALAYA BASIN ALLIGATOR HABITAT

REGION	ACREAGE	DESCRIPTION
A. Henderson Lake	15,000	Bounded on the west by the West Guide Levee, on the North by Little Fardoche Bayou, on the east by the Haha Bay and Gim Slough and on the south by La. Hwy. 3177.
B. Crook Chen Cove- Buffalo Cove	32,000	Beginning at the northwest corner of Attakapas W.M.A.: A line north along Lake Fausse Point Cut to Bayou Benoit; west to the West Guide Levee, north to the East-West Canal located approximately 3 miles south of Catahoula, La.: East approximately 2 miles to canal; southeast on the same canal to Bayou Crook Chene; east to the main channel of the Atchafalaya River; south to the north boundary of Attakapas W.M.A.; west to point of beginning.
C. Spike Bay-Berry Lake	8,000	Beginning at a point 1-1/2 miles northwest of Bayou Sorrel Landing: west along canal 5 miles; south along Spike Bay for 2 miles; east to intersect Bayou Sorrel then continue east along Bayou Sorrel to East Guide Levee; north to point of beginning.
D. Upper Grand River Flats	12,000	Beginning at Upper Grand River Landing: north along East Guide Levee approximately 9 miles to a canal running northwest; northwest along that canal 2-1/2 miles to King's Ditch; south approximately 5 miles to include Billy Little Lakes; southeast approximately 4 miles to intersection of Upper Grand River and Little Tensas Bayou, east along Upper Grand River to point of beginning.
E. Bayou Pigeon-Belle River-Flat Lake	140,000	Beginning at Bayou Pigeon Landing; south along East Guide Levee to Morgan City (excluding Flat Lake); north-northwest along east side of the main channel of Six Mile Lake approximately 10 miles to 21-Inch Canal; northeast on 21-Inch Canal to Bayou Boutte; north on Bayou Boutte to the east boundary line of Attakapas W.M.A.; then north along its east boundary to Grand Lake; north along the east bank of Grand Lake to Keelboat Pass; northeast along Keelboat Pass and Flat Lake Pass to intersection of Williams Canal and a canal running southwest-northeast; northeast along that canal to intersection of Intracoastal Canal (East Guide Levee); south to Bayou Pigeon Landing.
TOTAL ALLIGATOR HABITAT WITHIN BASIN TYPE	207,000	Tags may be issued at the rate of one tag per 320 acres of habitat.

## 2014 NON-MARSH ALLIGATOR TAG ALLOTMENT BY REGIONS

REGION	ACRES OF HABITAT	ALLOTMENT	ACRES/TAG	REMARKS
Public Lakes/Non-Coastal WMAs	115,601	867		Includes public lakes and non-coastal Wildlife Management Areas. Tag allotment may vary depending on alligator populations.
Cypress-Tupelo Swamp	750,625	4,692	160	Swamp habitat outside the Atchafalaya Basin.
Atchafalaya Basin	207,000	647	320	That portion of the Atchafalaya Basin determined to be Cypress-Tupelo swamp containing permanent water as determined by aerial observations as well as approximately 400 miles of travel by boat during April-June, 1985.
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>1,073,226</b>	<b>6,206</b>		

Additionally: Any private cypress-lake region habitat or coastal marsh alligator habitat determined by Department personnel to have a reproducing population may be issued tags at the rate of one tag per 80 acres of habitat; exceptionally dense alligator populations on a localized area may be issued tags at the rate of 1 tag per 25 acres of habitat (requires coordination and annual evaluation with Coastal and Nongame Resources or Wildlife Division personnel). In areas containing minimal acreage of isolated parcels of non-contiguous wetland habitat, an individual landowner may apply for an alligator harvest tag to remove an alligator from his property during the open alligator season. Such habitats include fresh marsh, cypress-tupelo swamp, lake habitat, ponds/borrow pits.

Approved by:

  
 Robert J. Barham, Secretary  
 La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries

5-6-2014  
 DATE